

BRIDGES OVER TIME

Ann Boucher, Montana State Office

A few miles south of Wolf Point, two bridges span the Missouri River. One of them arches high over the river, an impressive structure that once allowed steamboats to pass underneath. In contrast, its modern neighbor blends with the highway almost seamlessly.

The historic Wolf Point Bridge was slated for demolition until local citizens organized the Prairie Heritage Group to lead cooperative efforts to preserve it. It is the only remaining example of a Pennsylvania riveted through truss bridge. In 1997, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Interest in promoting tourism in the area, especially during the upcoming Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, prompted further cooperation among local, state and federal entities to construct an interpretive kiosk illustrating the bridge's history. About 30 local residents and state and federal representatives attended the dedication and ribbon cutting at the kiosk on July 26. Boone Whitmer of the Prairie Heritage Group was one of the featured speakers. Others included Larry Hamilton, Montana State Director; Tim Murphy, Miles City Field Manager; Todd Christensen, Supervisory Land Use Specialist from Miles City; Tod Kasten of the Montana Department of Commerce; and Betty Stone, Chair of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission.

The Wolf Point Bridge, also known as the Lewis and Clark Bridge, and kiosk mark the northern end of a proposed BLM Back Country Byway that will connect the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers. It is the first of 3 interpretive kiosks the BLM has planned for the Back Country Byway. Promoters hope that these preparations will attract more visitors to eastern Montana.



The old Wolf Point Bridge crosses the Missouri next to its inconspicuous modern replacement at the far right.



This interpretive kiosk at the south end of the historic Wolf Point Bridge was dedicated on July 26.

CHRISTENOT MILL SITE RECEIVES SPECIAL RECOGNITION

*Jean Nelson Dean,
Western Montana Zone*

In Montana, like much of the West, the history of pioneer families moving into the area, homesteading, and making a living may trace back only three, possibly four, generations. Even so, few people can still see and touch their ancestors' frontier experiences.

Fewer still can get their family history recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. Nick Shrauger and his family are the exceptions. Due to their hard work and the cooperation of the BLM Dillon Field Office, their family history is being preserved for them and others to experience for a long time.

After years of research by Shrauger, and two years of stabilizing and preserving the Christenot mill site near Virginia City by the Christenot Mill Preservation Association and the Dillon Field Office, it and the surrounding area of Union City were recognized and a sign dedicated by the National Register of Historic Places during a ceremony on August 25, 1999. The mill site, located on land managed by the Dillon Field Office, was constructed 133 years ago and is considered to be one of the most significant historic properties in the area. It is noted to be an excellent example of 1860s hard rock mining mill sites.



Nick Shrauger, Lisa Hulse and Mark Sant were key players in preserving the Christenot Mill. Photo by Richard Lee.

Benjamin Franklin (B.F.) Christenot constructed the mill site to mill gold shortly after the founding of Virginia City. With the building of the mill, Union City was born in the summer and fall of 1866.

Since 1997, under a challenge cost-share agreement between the Christenot Mill Preservation Association and the BLM, Christenot family members have dedicated 450 hours of volunteer labor and \$2,000 to help stabilize, protect and interpret the historic structure of the mill and Union City.

When the mill was built it included four Chilian rollers manufactured in Pennsylvania, shipped by paddlewheeler to Nebraska City, Nebraska, and hauled by ox train to Virginia City along the Bozeman Trail. This endeavor took 52 wagons and 235 yoke of oxen. A Chilian roller similar to those used at the mill has been found and, eventually, it will be displayed in Nevada City. This will allow people to learn the history of the Christenot mill and Union City without having to travel the narrow, steep road out of Alder Gulch to the site.

Nick Shrauger, leader of the Christenot Mill Preservation Association, stated in a letter to the BLM, "On behalf of the Association I wish to thank BLM for its excellent cooperation in preserving the site." He especially noted the excellent work of Mark Sant, Dillon Field Office Archaeologist, as well as the assistance of other members of the Dillon and Butte Field Offices and Western Montana Zone staff including, Scott Powers, Lee Walsh, Rich Maggio, John Wittingham, and Steve Black.



One of the walls being stabilized at the Christenot Mill site. Photo by Richard Lee.

GUBBINS IS NEW SOUTH DAKOTA FIELD MANAGER

Ann Boucher, Montana State Office

Patrick Gubbins moved from the Montana State Office this summer to become the South Dakota Field Manager in Belle Fourche. His new position is the latest in a career dedicated to all levels of resource management.

Some of Pat's prior positions include Law Enforcement Ranger at Cherry Creek State Recreation Area in Colorado; county natural resource specialist in Boulder, Colo.; and Regional Supervisor and Assistant Division Administrator for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena. He came to the BLM six years ago as Interpretive Program Lead and later

assumed the lead for the wilderness program.

Pat has enjoyed the variety and challenge of working at various levels of resource management. "I like to learn," he said, and dealing with so many different resource issues throughout his career has been an ongoing learning experience.

Pat earned a bachelor's degree in business and history, and a master's in resource management from George Williams College in Downers Grove, Ill. He earned a second master's in public administration from the University of Colorado.

Pat reported to duty in Belle Fourche on June 7. By the time State

Director Larry Hamilton administered the oath of office during a brief installation ceremony July 26, Pat was already well versed in local BLM issues and projects, and was working to establish and build solid working relationships with other agencies and congressional offices in the area.

"I want to work as smartly as possible in coordinating with other agencies so we can take on challenges together," Pat said. "I don't want to work in a vacuum."

Pat and his wife Grace have enjoyed their many duty stations, and look forward to exploring the Black Hills and Belle Fourche area.

OUTDOOR WRITERS GATHER IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Lorrene Schardt, Montana State Office

Hundreds of people from all over the United States gathered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, this summer for the 72nd annual conference of the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA). The BLM co-hosts the conference in partnership with other participating agencies and organizations.

Held June 20-24, the conference offered workshops and guest speakers covering a myriad of subjects including photography, conservation, tourism, communication/networking, and fishing tips. Attendees honed work-related skills and got an introduction to state-of-the-art recreation equipment. Hunting and fishing equipment companies showed their wares in hopes of capturing a selling write-up from one of the professional writers.

This year the BLM booth focused on the Lewis & Clark Expedition, and carried the theme of that historical journey and the American Indian culture into its presentations. Joyce Badgley Hunsaker gave an interpretation of the journey from the standpoint of Sacagawea. In full costume

and "Sacagawea spirit," she wowed the audience with her program.

Because OWAA conferences are held in different cities every year, many members combine them with family vacations. To accommodate that aspect, Lorrene Schardt organized a children's day with Outdoor Campus of Sioux Falls. Youth aged 7-15 years enjoyed a day of outdoor activities and education, including an illustration of a CD entitled "Ecosystems in your Backyard" (designed by the BLM Washington Office Environmental Education & Volunteer Group), and demonstrations that tested their outdoor ethics and knowledge. A nature hike allowed them to observe/identify birds, small animals, and vegetation, and for some, catching a fish was a first-time experience. The kids ended the day by enjoying a cobbler they made in an open fire pit. An overnight sleep-over at the zoo, affectionately called the "Zoo Snooze," was highlighted with flashlight visits to the animals.

BLMers involved with the event were Terry Lewis (Eastern States Office), Marilyn Krause (Miles City

Field Office), Chuck Berdan (South Dakota Field Office), and Ted Bailey and Lorrene Schardt (Montana State Office).



Joyce Badgley Hunsaker portrayed Sacagawea in a living history presentation at the OWAA Conference in Sioux Falls. Her performance was very well received. Photo by Marilyn Krause

The Missouri Breaks area is attracting a lot of attention lately, both locally and nationally. The featured article in this issue of the *Quarterly Steward* focuses on issues in the area. The Secretary of the Interior has also taken an active interest, and wrote the following opinion-editorial which was published in the *Great Falls Tribune* and *Billings Gazette* in late October.

The Corps of Rediscovery

By Bruce Babbitt

You can hear about it from others. You can read about it in books like Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage*. You can see it on maps dating from Lewis & Clark, 1805, through USGS, 1999. Yet nothing can quite prepare you for the experience, the sheer beauty and enchantment of the White Cliffs, elegantly standing, peering over the river, or the alluring landscape that captivates the viewer, until you experience Montana's Missouri Breaks in person.

As we near the bicentennial of the expedition by Lewis & Clark's 'Corps of Discovery,' hundreds of thousands of Americans will seek precisely that experience. It won't take splashy cover stories in *Travel*, *Outside* or *National Geographic* magazines to bring them. They will come. Uninvited. *En masse*. And they will keep coming long after the bicentennial fireworks have faded.

As one who grew up on the rim of the Grand Canyon, believe me. I know whereof I speak. The future — with all its commerce, ecotourism, traffic, recreation, historical heritage seekers and families buying t-shirts, post cards and ice cream — is coming at us. We need to prepare for it, fast, but prepare in a way that work and last through the next centennial.

Yet to say this is a truly important place that needs and deserves recognition is not enough. In the past, such recognition has led to creation of a National Park, sometimes at the cost of displacing the people who already live there, be it Native Americans, farmers, or ranchers.

This is public land, however, owned by every citizen in America

to manage as they see fit. Some of those Americans are calling for restrictive protection, the kind enjoyed by a Grand Canyon or Yosemite.

It so happens that I'm not one of them.

In fact, I'm not looking for a 'transfer of management' at all. I want to keep the current steward of the Missouri Breaks, the Montana office of the Bureau of Land Management. Nor do I want to kick out the current tenants, who are active contributors to the local economy.

Finally, we aren't looking to be abrasive, insensitive neighbors to the private property owners on adjacent lands. We're in the same boat as they are, and we need each other.

All right. So what *are* we seeking?

Here along the Upper Missouri Breaks, I am seeking a new type of conservation. My principal concern — and the force behind my desire to provide more protection — is the on-the-ground resources. I want to ensure the integrity of the landscape during the bicentennial year of high visitation, and long after. It's about conserving the resources, not creating visitor centers as people magnets. We can do this while celebrating and continuing uses that are compatible with the protection objectives. From my vantage point, a special designation — such as a strong, legislatively created National Conservation Area — would afford this level of protection.

To help us through this process, I have asked the BLM to convene the Central Montana Resource Advisory Council to hold public discussions specifically targeted at

coming up with a general framework. They should outline the key ideas and issues that must be considered. They should help define: which areas in the Upper Missouri Breaks country to include; which authorized uses to address; and how many ideas on long term objectives to adopt. Finally, they should identify a full range of concerns along with possible solutions to each. The RAC has started its work, but more discussions lie ahead. The understanding that you, as local Montanans offer, is central to making this work.

As one who has been wrestling with these issues for years, believe me on one thing: Consensus on how to protect and manage the Missouri Breaks won't come easy. It won't come overnight. And you won't agree on every issue.

It will be a messy, sometimes tedious, day-to-day search for small breakthroughs by a healthy fusion of a few determined officials mandated by the federal government, with resident Montanans who know the landscape intimately, who could benefit from more trade, but who also recognize that they, too, must somehow prepare for tens of thousands of more Americans soon to follow and arrive there unannounced.

Come to think of it, that is *exactly* what happened 200 years ago. We owe it to the memory and spirit of Lewis and Clark to follow in their footsteps as carefully and professionally as those men of undaunted courage.

Perhaps this time we should call the process — of officials, ranchers, landowners and conservationists seeking common ground — the "Corps of Rediscovery."

William Clark: *I walked on Shore found the Countrey rugged...I saw great numbers of the Big horned animals...the bottoms Contain Some Scattering Cotton wood.* May 28, 1805.



Breaks, Missouri River

Meriwether Lewis: *The hills and river Clifts which we passed today exhibit a most romantic appearnce....With the help of a little immagination...are made to represent eligrant ranges of lofty freestone buildings...it seemed as if those seens of visionary inchantment would never have an end.* May 31, 1805



White Cliffs, Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River



THE MIGHTY MISSOURI

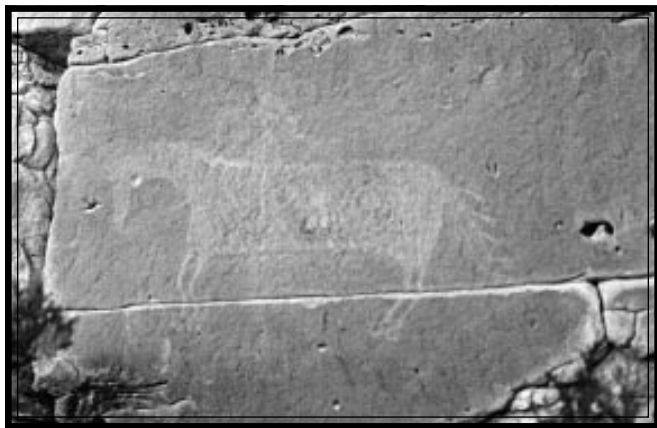
A Brief History

The Missouri River flows through Montana, peacefully meandering through farm land, rugged breaks and wide open plains. Soon after Lewis and Clark mapped the river during their epic journey, a flood of adventurers, fur trappers and homesteaders followed their path to tame the mighty Missouri. Today, visitors come from near and far to recreate and enjoy the river's scenery. The Upper Missouri is also the lifeblood for the many who have made it their home.

Through the years, the Missouri River Breaks area has served both practical and recreational purposes, and yet has retained much of its original character. In 1976, Congress recognized the need to maintain its integrity and designated 149 miles of the river in central Montana as a



Frank Hagadone Homestead, 1913.



Pictograph site.

component of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Congress called this longest free-flowing stretch of the Missouri an irreplaceable legacy of the historic American West that should be preserved and protected for present and future generations. It is the only Wild and Scenic River in the national system designated with a multiple use mandate.



Canoeing the White Rocks area.

In addition to the Wild and Scenic designation of the river itself, the Missouri Breaks and surrounding areas have some special designations to help maintain their character, including areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs); wilderness study areas (WSAs), and national historic trail segments.

The Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan was completed in 1978 and updated in 1993. Its goal is to improve existing resources and increase public awareness of the many unique values and opportunities along the river. The public contributed significantly to every phase in the development of this plan through both written and oral comments.

Ready or Not, Here They Come

We expect more and more people to come to the Missouri Breaks area, as well as to other key sites along the Lewis and Clark Trail, during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration (2003-2006). In fact, the area is already seeing a dramatic increase in popularity. Over the past year, visitation to this area has increased by 25 percent. The number of outfitters, guides and vendors has grown by 30 percent since 1997. In 1999, the Lewistown Field Office issued 27 special recreation permits that authorized various commercial activities along the Upper Missouri.

What is attracting so many people to the area? Hundreds of websites, tourism boards, advertising agencies and magazines tout the unique experience and alluring qualities of the river, and personal testimonies paint romantic pictures of the area's rugged beauty.

In addition to the increasing use of the Missouri Breaks area, there is an increasing trend in outdoor recreation on public lands in general. About one in three Americans visited a federal outdoor recreation site in 1997. All indications are that the Missouri Breaks area will

continue to be a prime destination for both out-of-state visitors and local residents.

The growing visitation along with ongoing traditional uses add up to increasing pressure on limited resources. One of the BLM's challenges is to balance multiple uses, including recreation and livestock grazing, in a manner that protects the area's cultural and natural resources.

Where are we now?

Because of the number of different land ownership and jurisdictions along the Upper Missouri, private landowners, federal, state and local agencies, and private organizations are working together to manage the area, especially as we approach the Bicentennial.

Over the past several months, the Missouri Breaks area has been the subject of national attention and local concern. In February 1999, Montana BLM managers met with the governor, Congressional representatives, and county commissioners regarding a proposal for special management of the area. No matter what the BLM may propose, everyone involved in these meetings agreed that the public should have the opportunity to comment. Local residents and river users were also concerned about the potential for impacting on-going, traditional uses in the area.

In May 1999, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, accompanied by Senator Max Baucus, author Stephen Ambrose, members of the press, and others, floated a portion of the Upper Missouri to see the area first hand and get a sense of the issues that need to be addressed in coming years. In June and July, the BLM hosted 11 public meetings around the state to hear comments from interested groups and individuals. The meetings generated a great deal of interest and attracted about 250 citizens, more than 100 written comments, and extensive media coverage. The meetings also sparked the formation of several local groups interested in issues related to

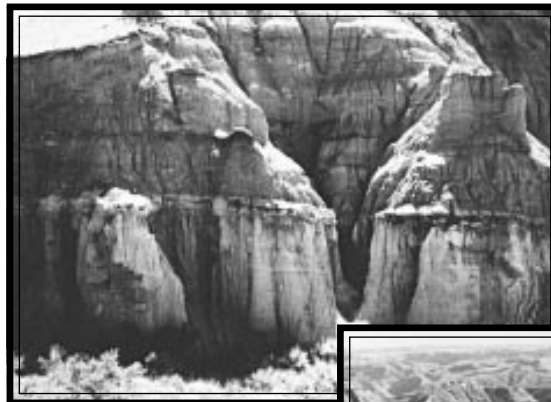
There are several special management designations in the area, each with its own special management options.

Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) — The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) required the BLM to review public lands determined to have wilderness characteristics, and to recommend to the President whether these lands were suitable or unsuitable for wilderness designation. Congress will ultimately determine what becomes wilderness and what is released for other purposes. Although Montana's report was submitted to Congress in 1993, a decision has not been made.

In the meantime the BLM is required to manage all WSAs, whether identified as suitable or unsuitable, so as not to impair their values for preservation as wilderness. This policy, however, is subject to certain exceptions and conditions. Activities such as grazing, mining and mineral leasing that existed prior to FLPMA may continue in the same manner and degree, even if this would impair wilderness suitability. Six WSAs along the Upper Missouri are currently managed under this policy.

National Historic Trails are authorized and designated by Congress. They are extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance. Their purpose is to identify and protect historic routes and their historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. Portions of the Nez Perce and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trails are located along the UMNWSR.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are areas unique to the BLM where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to public land and/or related waters containing resources, values, systems, processes, or hazards identified, designated, and protected through the land use planning process. The Cow Creek ACEC is located near the UMNWSR.



Antelope Creek WSA



Ervin Ridge WSA

A sampling of comments the RAC has received regarding the Upper Missouri Breaks area:

"We respect the wishes of landowners along the river to remain as agricultural producers and hope collaborative efforts will crystallize around this goal."

"We do not want to lose sight of natural resource protection and restoration."

"...the BLM should actively work to protect and preserve the wilderness character of these lands."

"...farmers and ranchers have been good stewards of the land and their herds are hardly invasive....cows didn't destroy the Eye of the Needle."

"Montana's agricultural families have played a fundamental role in maintaining and preserving Montana's scenic landscape including many historic sites along the Lewis and Clark Trail."

"We welcome federal support but not federal control..."

"...we want to emphasize the national significance of these federal public lands and the agency's obligation to manage the lands for a national constituency."

"Ensure Montana's citizen interests are placed ahead of tourists."

"The current wild and scenic designation of the river has sufficient authority to protect it and restrict activities that are not consistent with management objectives."

"The reality of increasing use of the river cannot be ignored. We urge the agency, landowners, business people, recreation groups and public interest groups to work together to minimize the effects of the inevitable on this spectacular place."



Climbing to the Eye of the Needle.

the Missouri, a subject that continues to be of major interest to many existing organizations and individuals. Some of the recurring concerns revolve around increased recreational use/carrying capacity, cottonwood regeneration, livestock grazing and trespass on private lands.

Is There Common Ground?

Almost everyone recognizes that the Missouri River Breaks area will see more and more visitation in the next few years and beyond the Bicentennial. There is also an overwhelming interest in maintaining the integrity and primitive nature of the river in the face of these increased pressures. Beyond these sentiments, the debate heats up. We want the Missouri to stay as it is despite increasing use, but we have different ideas on how to achieve that goal. Is there common ground on this issue? Is there a workable solution to protect one of our nation's treasures without disrupting the livelihoods of those who live near the river?

To ensure effective grassroots input to these questions, the Secretary of the Interior asked the Central Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) to consider the issues affecting the area and provide recommendations for the area's future by Dec. 31, 1999. As part of this process, the

RAC is now actively seeking public input. About 56 individuals and 29 representatives of special interest groups spoke during public comment periods at a September RAC meeting in Great Falls. The RAC has also received about 200 written comments. In addition to public comment, the RAC will use a variety of information

sources, including existing management plans and comparative analyses of similar areas.

Finding creative and effective solutions to the challenges in the Missouri Breaks area won't be easy, but our best chance of success lies in considering every possible angle. It's a formidable task, but as one comment letter stated, "The Upper Missouri deserves our best effort."



Pelicans on the Wild and Scenic.

If you would like more information regarding the Upper Missouri and Missouri River Breaks or the RAC process, please contact Dave Mari, Lewistown Field Manager, at (406) 538-1945 or Craig Flentie, Public Affairs Specialist, at (406) 538-1943.

WATERING SYSTEM HELPS ESTABLISH NEW PLANTINGS

Jody Peters, Havre Field Station

A grove of cottonwood trees along the Missouri River got a new breath of life this spring.

On April 27, staff from the Havre Field Station spent a beautiful sunny day working to restore woody riparian vegetation under a cottonwood grove at Pablo Rapids on the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River.

Woody riparian vegetation, which is crucial for many wildlife species and important to river recreationists, has been disappearing all along the river. This particular grove of cottonwoods is in its last years with old and dying trees, with no woody understory such as green ash, box elder, currant, chokecherry, red osier dogwood, or buffalo berry to replace them. Losing this riparian stand would degrade a popular river camping area and leave one more stretch of the river without important wildlife habitat.

Jody Peters, wildlife biologist, originally planned to plant hundreds of trees and shrubs and get assistance for hand watering from private conservation groups and river outfitters. Rangeland management specialist Mitch Forsyth had worked with solar panels and pumps, and suggested setting up a more practical drip watering system. The plantings will need to survive long term on their own, through summer heat, winter ice, and use by wildlife. The plan is to

water them for two years to establish a good root system, then reuse the water system at a new site. The end goal is to establish healthy woody riparian communities wherever possible to provide this crucial habitat for wildlife and secondly to provide more cover for

recreationists in established camping areas.

While Jody lined up the trees, planting layout and extra riparian money, Mitch took the lead on laying out the solar watering system. Lowell Hassler did our wiring and made sure everything

worked from the electrical side. Mitch and seasonal Bob Kurtz, designed and put together the plumbing and made sure the entire system was working.

Ralph Page designed, cut and welded our stand and frame for the solar panels.

Jody Peters asked for assistance for the project, as trees had already been delivered and needed to be planted immediately. The staff divided up the tasks of setting and mounting the solar panels and stand, wiring and setting the pump, laying out the watering lines, auguring holes for the trees, and sorting and planting 135 trees and shrubs. The teamwork and organization paid off. What was expected to take more than a day was completed in less than four hours.

Most of the Havre staff participated, including Mitch Forsyth, Bob Kurtz, Loretta Retan, Ken Koncilya, Lou Hagener, Lowell Hassler, and Jody Peters. Laura Thompson missed the sun, but did her part by keeping the office open and running.

American Rivers, a river conservation group, provided funding assistance.



Mitch Forsyth and Bob Kurtz readying pump for placement in river.



View of open area planted with trees and shrubs. Notice lack of existing woody understory.

IF THEY COULD TALK TO THE SAGE GROUSE

Jean Nelson Dean, Western Montana Zone

If wildlife biologists could ask animals, "where are you from?" and "where are you going?" their ability to manage wildlife habitats would measurably improve. However, most biologists are not Dr. Doolittle, and they must rely on techniques such as radio telemetry and surveys to get those answers.

Knowing where animals live and what their migration patterns are assists in making important decisions in habitat management, particularly for a species in decline such as sage grouse.

Currently, sage grouse are being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. However, information on their numbers and their movements between suitable habitats is limited.

The BLM Dillon Field Office manages thousands of acres of sage grouse habitat. Recently, the office began a challenge cost-share project to identify sage grouse strutting grounds called leks, their important seasonal habitats, and their key migration corridors in southwest Montana.

"We want to know how much the birds are moving because we want to know the critical areas for the birds," said Jim Roscoe, wildlife biologist for the BLM Dillon Field Office.

Roscoe is directing the challenge cost-share project in coordination with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; Gallatin Wildlife Association; Big Sky Upland Bird Association; Western Montana College; and the Montana Audubon Council.

According to Roscoe, biologists and conservationists saw a decline in sage grouse numbers ten years ago. Cooperative research proposals were developed by interested groups, however, they were unable to get a research project fully implemented at the time. Meanwhile, efforts in Idaho gathered significant new information

on sage grouse ecology, including information that indicated some sage grouse were moving longer distances between seasonal habitats than previously thought. Some of these "migratory" birds were even thought to be moving across the Continental Divide into southwest Montana while other "non-migratory" populations stayed all year in a relatively small areas. Prior to this research it was thought all sage grouse were "non-migratory," moving only within a two to three mile radius of a lek throughout the year.

Research in Dillon will mirror Idaho's research and contribute more information on local population movement, habitat uses, and migrations of sage grouse between southwest Montana and southeast Idaho.

"We want to know why some birds are migrating while others in the same area are staying in residence. What is the difference?" questions Roscoe.

Roscoe also wonders how the loss and conversion of sage grouse habitat in Idaho and Montana had on the birds' migration patterns.

This year's challenge cost share funding purchased 10 radio transmitters to track sage grouse movements. Early last spring, BLM biologists and volunteers captured sage grouse on their leks and placed radio transmitters on them to track their movements throughout the year. So far these grouse have provided a few surprises with some birds staying relatively close to the leks where they were first captured, while others, mostly males, have moved as far as 20 miles away. This information has already identified some "key areas" that appear to vital to sage grouse use. The group plans to use this baseline information to secure increased funding for 30 to 40 more radio transmitters and follow more birds in the future.

Volunteers from the Big Sky Upland Bird Association and Gallatin Wildlife Association contributed hundreds of hours last spring to count male sage grouse on several leks, and looked for previously unidentified leks. They will also collect some localized harvest information in the area this fall.

Roscoe feels this information will not only help develop strategies for managing habitat for sage grouse, but will also benefit many other wildlife species who depend on the sagebrush community.

The challenge cost-share group is also interested in educating people about sage grouse and their habitat. Several presentations have been made on the project, and they hope to involve school kids by developing an Internet web page that will display tracking information throughout the seasons. So, though he can't "talk with the animals," Roscoe says he is willing to talk about the project "anytime, anywhere, and to anybody."



Rick Smauk, Western Montana College student, holds a sage grouse with radiotransmitter. Photo by Jean Nelson Dean

IT'S ALL IN HIS DAY'S WORK

Mary Ramsey, North Dakota Field Office

There are some individuals who seem to devote a better part of their lives volunteering their time and helping others. The North Dakota Field Office feels fortunate to have such an individual on its staff. Don Rufledt, natural resource specialist, donates countless hours to both BLM and non-government activities.

In particular, Don has taken the Schnell Recreation Area under his wing. For Don, a day's work at Schnell can end as late as 9 p.m. Whether the trail needs to be cleaned, the campground needs to be maintained, or grounds need to be mowed, Don stays until the job is done. That doesn't even begin to cover the hours he spends on the phone with the various contracted help.

As more improvements are made, more groups use Schnell Recreation Area. Cub Scouts, horseback riders and elementary school classes all want to spend time there. Don schedules the activities of these groups and is generally there to welcome them and answer any questions they may have.

Doug Burger, Don's supervisor, said, "In my 20 plus years with BLM, Don is one of the most conscientious, hard working, friendly and loyal employees I have ever met. An office staffed with a half dozen like him could run so smoothly and efficiently you could go on vacation for 30 days and never spend a single moment worrying about things back at the office."

Don's volunteer activity isn't limited to Schnell, or even to BLM activities, however. When the North Dakota Field Office is involved in activities such as the All American Kid's Fishing Derby, Southwest Angler's Sports Show or Taylor Horsefest, Don is always willing

to take a shift - or two. Don also takes an active interest in church and community activities. He has held numerous leadership roles in his church and regularly volunteers to help family, friends and neighbors. Whether he's spraying dandelions for his neighbors or donating blood (more than two gallons so far!), Don finds a way to generously give to others.

Volunteer work is something Don has always done. Consciously or unconsciously he has always put forth his best effort with any project he was involved in. If it meant putting in extra hours, he didn't stop to think whether or not he was "on the clock".

Don and Bonnie, his wife of 23 years, have two children. Wendy is a recent college graduate and Jason is a student at North Dakota State University in Fargo.



Don Rufledt at his second home.

FIRE CREWS DO MORE THAN FIGHT FIRES

Craig Flentie, Lewistown Field Office

What are the fire crews doing right now?

How many times has this question come up among program leads when deciding how to complete field projects?

Of course, the primary mission of our fire crews is to be prepared for wildfire emergencies, and the national attention on training standards requires more and more time and training.

In those time gaps between training and actual fire-related duties, however, these crews have become an invaluable means of accomplishing numerous regular field projects as well as some unplanned — but urgent — tasks.

Some projects, such as cabin/cultural site stabilization, hiking trail construction and maintenance, providing firewood at certain recreation sites, and providing certain crew members as members of national readiness review teams, are considered high

profile by the public and management. Other projects are as ordinary as trash removal, installing new signs, removing old signs, rolling up old fence, or the wide variety of exotic tasks commonly associated with pit toilets.

Sometimes these completed field projects are noticed by the public and BLM staff and management; sometimes they aren't.

One unexpected project this summer, however, attracted the attention of the entire city of Lewistown. In mid-August, a tornado blew through town, blocking streets and damaging vehicles with fallen trees. The fire crews soon joined the community spirit of neighbors helping neighbors and volunteered for "saw crews" which quickly cleared the streets of debris, allowing the city to start moving again.

Hats off to our BLM fire crews who are always up to the task — whatever task that may be.

NOTEWORTHY

PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION HOLDS ANNUAL CONVENTION — This year's Public Lands Foundation (PLF) annual convention was held in Billings September 15-19. Conference highlights included a tour and barbecue at Pompeys Pillar National Historic Landmark and a panel called "Access for Multiple Use." Facilitated by Montana State Director Larry Hamilton, the panel had representation from land owners, outfitters, county commissioners, mining interests, and federal and state agencies. Other conference topics included public land issues, off-highway vehicles, the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, and National Public Lands Day. The PLF is the only national membership organization dedicated solely to protecting and perpetuating the national public land system under the administration of the BLM. Many of the Foundation's members are experienced public land managers with unparalleled professional experience in all natural resources.

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY — Montana / Dakotas BLM hosted four National Public Lands Day events on September 25.

At the **Matthews Recreation Area** near Miles City, about 35 volunteers worked to install a storage unit for the site host and gravel a trail between the picnic area and the Yellowstone River. A BLM staffer also led a bird walk, and another led some hands-on activities related to gold panning and prehistoric weapons.

About 45 volunteers turned out at the **Sundance Lodge Recreation Area** near Laurel, to begin work on two electric fences to protect the tree/shrub shelterbelts that were planted in cooperation with Pheasants Forever and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks from browsing deer and moose. They also did some cleanup and completed concrete work on a handicapped accessible sidewalk to an outdoor vault toilet. After lunch there were some short presentations about noxious weeds, upland game bird habitat, and environmental ethics of mountain men and Native Americans.

In Dickinson, North Dakota, the BLM staffed a booth at the local mall to advertise the **Schnell Recreation Area** and promote a guided tour of the Bur Oak Nature Trail held October 2. The North Dakota Field Office also plans to give a special tour to teachers in the spring when weather conditions and plant identification are at their best. The North Dakota Field Office is developing a teacher's guide to facilitate the use of the area as an outdoor classroom.

Volunteers and the **Bear Butte Creek Riparian Improvement Project** in South Dakota installed a riparian fence, water tank, pole and tree revetment, and did some boundary fence maintenance and clean up. While about 87 adult volunteers worked, 36 children participated in a fishing derby. Participants heard presentations on riparian areas and got a tour of the riparian area. Fish and fishing topics were also discussed.

The *Quarterly Steward* is published every three months by the Bureau of Land Management and distributed in Montana and the Dakotas. It is produced by the External Affairs Staff, Montana State Office.

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